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MN021601. Navy Medicine's Force Retires; DiRosa Takes Over  
By JO2 Jodi M. Durie, Naval Medical Center Portsmouth  
LITTLE CREEK, Va. - Navy Medicine said farewell to its Force Master Chief HMCM(SW) Mark R. Weldon last Friday (April 12) during a combined change of office and retirement ceremony held aboard USS Portland (LSD-37) on Naval Amphibious Base Little Creek. Weldon served as the seventh Force Master Chief for the Navy Medical Department and Director of Medical Department Enlisted Personnel since June 1998.

HMCM(SW/AW) Jacqueline L. K. DiRosa relieved Weldon and became the Navy's first female Force Master Chief.

"Master Chief Mark Weldon has been shepherding the hospital corps and dental technicians of the Navy for the last four years," said VADM Michael L. Cowan, MC, the Navy's Surgeon General and Chief of the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery. "Many of you, particularly you younger ones, have never known a different force master chief. It's been his guidance, his strength of character, his clarity of the mission and his absolute resolute unwillingness to accept anything but the very finest that has helped mold ... Navy Medicine."

Weldon's advocacy and commitment to junior sailors was clearly evident by his selection of HM3 Daniel Henry as the guest speaker.

As the new Force Master Chief, DiRosa will be the advocate for more than 30,000 enlisted sailors of the medical department including dental technicians, hospital corpsmen and other enlisted personnel assigned to medical activities.

Previously DiRosa served as the Command Master Chief of the forward-deployed command ship USS Blue Ridge (LCC 19). She completed two South Pacific Forward Presence deployments and multiple joint military exercises. Her other assignments include duty aboard Naval Hospitals San Diego, California and Bremerton, Washington, USS Acadia (AD 42), USS Kitty Hawk (CV 63) and USS Supply (AOE 6).

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MN021602. Sub Medical Research Lab Studies Rescue Methods  
By Robert A. Hamilton, The Day, Groton, Conn.

GROTON, Conn. - From new methods to freshen the air on a disabled submarine, to putting critical information at the disposal of any survivors, the medical research arm of the submarine force is seeking ways to make sure if a Navy submarine ever sinks, its crew can last until rescue forces arrive.

CAPT Michael Curley, MSC, commander of the Naval Submarine Medical Research Laboratory at Naval Submarine Base Groton, said six years before the Russian submarine Kursk sank to the bottom of the Barents Sea, the Navy was putting on a major push to make survival, escape and rescue a viable option for its crews.

Speaking to the local chapter of the Navy League this week, Curley said one of the most significant changes taking place on submarines involves modifications to the escape trunks to accommodate the new Submarine Escape and Immersion Equipment, a waterproof suit and personal life raft that would allow submariners to escape from as deep as 650 feet.

So far 10 of the Navy's submarines have been modified for the new gear, and work is continuing on the others.

But many of the changes are more simple, Curley said. For instance, previously information about how to deal with conditions on a disabled submarine used to be scattered through several technical manuals on a boat, but in the event that, say, a third-class boatswain's mate was the most senior survivor, the men might not know where it was all located.

Today, the research lab has gathered all the information into a single volume, specific to each class and even different models within each class, that is located near the escape hatches.

Another major concern has been how to remove carbon dioxide from the air if the motors on the scrubbers are not working because of a loss of electrical power.

Lithium hydroxide can remove carbon dioxide from the air if it is spread around the ship and fanned, but the granular material is caustic to the skin and respiratory tract. So two new methods to employ lithium hydroxide have been developed.

One involves a blue curtain-like piece of gear that can be filled with lithium hydroxide, keeping it safely contained but still allowing it to cleanse the air. The other is lithium hydroxide embedded in a polymer matrix that can be rolled out on the floor.

"Our goal is to keep the survivors alive for seven days," which is thought to be the longest it might take to mount a rescue, Curley said. "Presently we don't have that capability, but we're close."

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#### MN021603. Navy Medicine Supports Saving For the Future

WASHINGTON, DC - The Department of the Navy strongly supports the U.S. Savings Bond program, and wants you to know how easy it is to save for the future with this reliable, easily accessible investment.

The annual U.S. Savings Bond Drive begins May 1 throughout the Navy. Navy Medicine's RADM Dennis D. Woofter, DC, is the vice chair of the 2002 Navy campaign.

"I think everyone should consider the security, liquidity, tax advantages and inflation protection that U.S. Savings Bonds offer when putting together personal financial plans," said Woofter.

The U.S. Savings Bond program has a proud history for both America and investors. It was initiated 61 years ago as an effort to support and strengthen America's economy during World War II. Today, savings bonds continue to strengthen the nation's economy while giving Americans a powerful and effective way to save for the future.

An outstanding characteristic of savings bonds is they are a steady performer that will never lose money. They are also an exceptionally easy way to invest - investment portfolios can be started through payroll deduction with less than \$5 per pay period. They can also be purchased over the Internet, through financial institutions, and through automatic savings or checking debiting.

Information on how to invest through U.S. Savings Bonds will be distributed the first week of May. The campaign continues through May 31. Contact your Command's Savings Bond Coordinator for more information.

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#### MN021604. Sailor Moms Get Own Room For Breastfeeding at Sigonella

SIGONELLA, Sicily - Health experts agree that breastfeeding is one of the best ways to give babies a healthy start. Breastfed babies have improved mental development and fewer respiratory, urinary tract and ear infections. Recent studies also show that there may be a link between breast feeding and lower incidences of sudden infant death syndrome, diabetes and allergic diseases.

Breastfeeding is also healthier for mothers. Moms who nurse their babies reduce their risk of ovarian and breast cancer, have quicker weight loss after giving birth, and have less bone loss and fewer hip fractures in old age.

Despite the benefits of breastfeeding, many mothers find it difficult to continue after they've returned to work.

"Returning to work is often the number one reason women cite for discontinuing breastfeeding," said LT Christa Kuehler, NC, a lactation consultant at U.S. Naval Hospital Sigonella. She said that 90 percent of the moms discharged from the hospital are nursing their babies, but this drops to 30 to 40 percent by the time the baby is six months old.

To help combat this drop, U.S. Naval Hospital Sigonella recently established a breastfeeding space within the Aircraft Intermediate Maintenance Department on Naval Air Station Sigonella. The female bunkroom within the command now has a hospital-grade electric breast pump for use by women at AIMD, Helicopter Support Squadron HC-4 and any other women authorized to enter the AIMD buildings.

"This project has been over a year in the making and will greatly improve access to a private area for nursing mothers (in Sigonella)," said Kuehler. "Our goal is to increase the (breastfeeding) rate to 50 to 60 percent at six months. We hope this room and others will help facilitate this."

Another breastfeeding room has been set up in the hospital's pediatric clinic. There are at least three other naval bases with special breastfeeding rooms.

Sigonella's All Officer's Spouses Club and the Chaplain's Department via the MOMS Club of Sigonella donated funding for the breast pump in AIMD.

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#### MN021605. Navy Medicine Shares Skills With Bremerton Community

By Judith Robertson, Naval Hospital Bremerton

BREMERTON, Wash. - Civilian and military public health providers, policemen, firemen, American Red Cross workers, and first responders gathered in Kitsap County (Wash.) recently to learn about the medical management of chemical, biological, radiological and environmental casualties.

Naval Hospital Bremerton health surveillance group hosted a five-person team from the Navy Environmental and Preventive Medicine Unit 5 from San Diego, which lead a three-day course for healthcare providers and a one-day

course for first responders. The team focused on ways to identify, decipher and treat casualties resulting from exposure to unknown, but potentially lethal, substances.

Naval Hospital Bremerton's Commanding Officer CAPT Christine Hunter, MC, said the purpose of the training was to share information and resources so that area healthcare professionals and responders would be ready should an emergency occur. She said it reflects Navy Medicine's motto change from "standing by, ready to assist" to the more proactive "steaming to assist."

According to NEPMU 5's CAPT Josh Senter, MSC, before Sept. 11, he and his team had a hard time getting an audience for their special training. Now, they get large, interested groups where ever they go - more than 160 healthcare professionals and responders turned out for the Bremerton training.

"It's a matter of training people to think about things that they have already been trained to do," said Senter. "We're here to tell them, 'apply your skills and knowledge you already have to another situation.'"

One community health provider found the training on decontamination especially helpful since she often finds herself dealing with methamphetamine abusers.

"We have a high concentration of meth users," said Deb Randall-Penney, who works at a community drug recovery center. "About 50 percent of individuals coming in for drug or alcohol treatment fall into this category. This course was very valuable for (people who experience) everyday contact of chemical by-products ... waste."

The NEPMU 5 provides training to Navy and other military members from the Mississippi River to the West Coast.

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#### MN021606. Yokosuka Graduates Japanese Medical Interns

By Bill Doughty, U.S. Naval Hospital Yokosuka, Japan

YOKOSUKA, Japan - Six Japanese physicians celebrated the end of a grueling but rewarding year recently as interns at U.S. Naval Hospital Yokosuka.

Yokosuka has been hosting Japanese interns for 50 years. The physicians learn U.S.-style medicine and serve as a bridge between the hospital and the Japanese medical community. Since 1952, more than 350 Japanese men and women have participated in the program, serving Navy patients at the hospital.

"Our interns are part of a tremendous network of healthcare providers," said CAPT Adam M. Robinson Jr., MC, the hospital's commanding officer.

The hospital's medical staff voted Dr. Kentaro Tamura, a rugby champion who is also known for his gentle and empathetic approach with patients, as the hospital's top intern. Tamura has accepted a position at nearby Kyosai hospital so he can work with any of the naval hospital's patients who might receive care at the Japanese hospital.

"I didn't want to leave here (the naval hospital)," said Tamura.

It's common for the Japanese physicians who interned at Yokosuka to continue studying Western-style medicine as residents in the U.S.

Six new Japanese interns will take the place of the graduating ones.

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#### MN021607. San Diego Working On a Better Joint Idea

By Aveline V. Allen, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery

SAN DIEGO - By the hundreds of thousands, Americans have had their diseased or injured knee or hip joints replaced, almost always with great success. Yet years later, the surgery must occasionally be redone. Man-made joints just wear out quicker than the ones mother nature supplies.

But help to reduce the number of "resurgeries" may be on the way. Orthopedists at Naval Medical Center San Diego are working with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to test new, tougher replacement joints that can last up to 30 years.

"We have been involved for two years now with FDA trials of ceramic bearing surfaces of the hip that will, hopefully, increase longevity of the prosthesis," said CDR Michael P. Muldoon, MC, director of adult reconstructive service in the orthopedics department at San Diego.

Muldoon has been at San Diego for more than five years, using his skills as an orthopedic surgeon to find better treatment for his patients. The long-lasting ceramic joint is just one of his initiatives. Performing hip arthroscopy is another.

"If patients have problems such as fragments of bone or cartilage or soft tissue tears, the hip can be inspected and treated with an arthroscope much like a knee can," said Muldoon. "We have treated about 50 people over the past three years with hip arthroscopy."

Treatment for repairing and correcting knee problems has also led to some new innovative technology.

"If a hip or knee has an alignment problem that is causing pain and the joint has not completely worn out, we like to realign the joint," said Muldoon. "We prefer this approach when possible especially in younger patients less than 50 years of age."

Although there are several new, less intense ways to repair joint problems for knees and hips, it is not always the answer for everyone. More radical surgery may be needed.

"If patients have symptoms that cannot be controlled by conservative measures, joint replacement may be required," said Muldoon.

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MN021608. Naval Reserve Hygienist Deploys With Wasp  
BY J01(SW) Crystal M. Raner, USS Wasp

ABOARD USS WASP - Noreen Murphy is a dental hygienist who is also a Naval Reservist drilling out of Albany, N.Y. In February, she learned USS Wasp was leaving for a scheduled six-month deployment without a dental hygienist.

"I have always wanted to deploy on a ship," said Murphy. "I can be a dental hygienist anywhere, but to be a Sailor at sea is what the Navy is all about."

She volunteered to come on active duty, and a month later, DT2 Murphy reported to the Wasp's dental department, joining the dental officer and six other DTs. The transition from civilian to Sailor was seamless.

"Murphy has been a welcome surprise," said DTC(SW/AW/FMF) Lorenda Gouker. "Whether she is stationed on sea duty or a shore assignment, the Naval Reserve has continued to keep her focused on what is expected of a Sailor."

Murphy's aspirations are the same as many of her new shipmates.

"I never had the opportunity to earn my enlisted surface warfare specialist pin," said Murphy. "Everywhere I go on the ship, I hear Sailors, many of them junior to me, boasting about how many signatures they have to go. The more they talk, the more I want my pin."

Murphy did see active duty time, with assignments overseas and on both coasts, but she said none of those assignments is beating her time aboard Wasp.

"If I was working in the civilian community, I would tell people I simply have a job as a dental hygienist," said Murphy. "But the Navy isn't just a job, it is a way of life."

Murphy is putting together a scrapbook of her time aboard Wasp to help

her remember her time aboard the ship.

"Any reservist would die to have an experience like the one I have been lucky enough to have on Wasp," said Murphy.

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MN021609. National Infant Immunization Week Serves as Reminder to Parents  
By Aveline V. Allen, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery

WASHINGTON, DC - Measles, mumps, and chicken pox are but a few of the diseases that your child could develop if they are not properly immunized.

April 14-20 is National Infant Immunization Week, and parents should ensure their little ones get the vaccines they need to keep them healthy. This week should serve as a reminder to make sure kids have a healthy start to life.

"The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention lists immunizations first on its list of the ten most important public health achievements of the 20th century, and for good reason," said CAPT Jeff Yund, MC, deputy director, preventive medicine and occupational health at the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery. No other health measure has prevented more illness and saved more lives than immunizations."

According to the CDC, the major goals for parents and caregivers this week include:

- inform them of the need to protect their children from birth against 11 vaccine-preventable diseases
- encourage better communication between parents/caregivers and their health care provider
- recommend to parents and caregivers to make and keep needed appointments for vaccines for their youngsters
- increase parents awareness of and access to resources, such as toll-free 800 numbers, to assist them in locating facilities that offer free or low-cost immunizations, especially if they do not have insurance or a health care provider.

Communities also play a part in this week's activities. The CDC suggest that communities should partner together with local groups, organizations, businesses, hospitals, churches and other local community groups to plan activities to make persons aware of the message being put out this week. Communities should do things like plan health fairs, expand medical clinic hours, give out brochures at grocery stores, movie theaters, and other public places, and conduct immunization fairs.

"We should all take the fullest advantage of this marvel of modern medicine, especially when the health of our youngest and most vulnerable is at stake," said Yund.

For additional information on National Infant Immunization Week, see the CDC's website at <http://www.cdc.gov/nip/publications/niiw/>.

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MN021610. HealthWatch: Cholesterol Can Add Up to Heart Disease

By Susan M. Koerner, Naval Forces Marianas

GUAM - High-density lipoprotein cholesterol, low-density lipoprotein cholesterol, total cholesterol - knowing how your cholesterol levels add up can help you prevent a heart attack or stroke. Heart and circulatory disease is the leading cause of death of Americans, and it's estimated that 50 million Americans have high cholesterol - a key indicator that you are at risk for heart disease.

Cholesterol is a waxy type substance that occurs naturally in the body. It is necessary for the production of some hormones, vitamin D and bile acids that help digest fat. However, the excess, which in most cases comes from diet, is deposited in the arteries, causing narrowing and blockage of

blood flow.

"Within the U.S. the average age of those with high cholesterol is in the 40s," said Luis Martinez, health systems specialist at U.S. Naval Hospital Guam.

Martinez presents a cholesterol-management class twice a month for those with high cholesterol and those who want to learn to prevent elevated cholesterol.

Martinez recommends that a person have their cholesterol checked at age 25, and re-checked every five years if the initial reading is within recommended levels. Re-checks are necessary since cholesterol readings tend to go up as individuals age.

Martinez said establishing healthy eating habits early is important to keep cholesterol in check.

"Some parents have the misconception that (their) children can eat whatever," he said. "But they should be teaching them healthy eating habits that will go with them into adult life."

Martinez said that a cholesterol level of 200, no matter what your age, is considered high.

"Between 200 and 239 you are considered at risk, if it is 240 or higher, you must make some changes quickly," he said.

Two components, low-density lipoprotein (LDL) and high-density lipoprotein (HDL), make up the total. The LDL is often called bad cholesterol.

"Remember L for lousy," said Martinez.

The LDL reading should be under 130. "LDL is sticky and contributes to narrowing the arteries."

The goal for HDL should be in the range of 35 to 59. "The HDL is considered the good stuff since it helps carry away the LDL," said Martinez.

Health-care providers turn first to diet to bring high cholesterol numbers down, targeting the reduction of LDL levels by reducing total fat, both saturated and unsaturated, in your diet to less than 30 percent of caloric intake.

"Saturated fat is the real bad guy," said Martinez. He recommends reducing saturated fat in the diet to less than 10 percent of total daily calories.

In addition to dietary changes, Martinez also recommend exercise, which increases the levels of HDL.

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